

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 EA-11 NEA-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 MMS-04 ACDA-19 SAJ-01

OMB-01 IO-14 NIC-01 DRC-01 /185 W
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R 271315Z SEP 74
FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4807
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCUSNAVEUR
CINCPAC

S E C R E T PORT LOUIS 0818

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR IO MP
SUBJECT: DIEGO CARGIA -- MAURITIAN CONSIDERATIONS

REF: (A) PORT LOUIS 0741 AND (B) PORT LOUIS 0793

1. SUMMARY: OUR DIEGO EXPANSION AND ITS CONNECTION WITH UK-GOM
DEFENSE AGREEMENT IS LIKELY TO BE HOT POLITICAL ISSUE IN ELECTION
EXPECTED NEXT AUGUST. WHOEVER WINS WILL HAVE CAMPAIGNED ON ANTI-
DIEGO PLANK, WILL BE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO NON-ALIGNED VIEWS
(ESPECIALLY INDIAN) AND TO SOVIET MACHINATIONS, AND WILL PROBABLY
PRESS FOR MODIFICATION IN UK-GOM AGREEMENT TO PREVENT DIEGO
EXPANSION. TIMES HAVE CHANGED SINCE 1965 WHEN WE MADE DIEGO
ARRANGEMENTS IN RELATIVE VACUUM, AND WE SHOULD NOW LOOK HARD AT
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IMPLICATIONS OF POTENTIAL EROSION OF OUR LEGAL/POLITICAL BASIS

FOR DIEGO. END SUMMARY

2. I HAVE REPORTED THAT PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM IS GRADUALLY BECOMING MORE ACTIVE THAN PASSIVE IN HIS OPPOSITION TO OUR DIEGO EXPANSION (REFTELS). HIS REASONS ARE MANY AND OFTEN DEVIOUS, BUT ARE MAINLY THESE PROBABLY IN FOLLOWING ORDER:

A) HE WANTS TO CLING TO POWER IN THE NEXT ELECTION, WHICH IS NOW GENERALLY ANTICIPATED FOR AUGUST 1975. HE IS WORRIED BY BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT WING OPPOSITION PLUS DIVISIONS WITHIN HIS OWN LABOR PARTY. ONE OF THE FEW ISSUES ON WHICH NEARLY ALL THE OPPOSITION CAN AND WILL AGREE IS DIEGO. IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF HIS OWN PARTY ARE ALSO ANTI-DIEGO. THUS DIEGO -- NOT JUST OUR EXPANSION BUT MORE FUNDAMENTALLY RAM'S SO-CALLED MISTAKE OF LETTING UK KEEP IT IN FIRST PLACE -- IS BOUND TO BE A MAJOR ELECTION ISSUE.

B) HE FEELS HE HAS MORE TO LOSE THAN GAIN BY RESISTING PRESSURES FOR IOZP AND AGAINST DIEGO FROM NON-ALIGNED. PRESSURE FROM INDIA IS STRONGEST AND HERE THE CHEESE REALLY BINDS FOR HIM. NEW DELHI HAS BEEN BACKING HIM TO THE HILT -- TO THE POINT OF BLATANT INTERFERENCE SOME SAY. THUS HE IS VERY SUSCEPTIBLE TO INDIAN PRESSURES AND HE WOULD BE IN SERIOUS TROUBLE IF DELHI SHOULD EVER DECIDE TO SWITCH HORSES.

C) HE IS ALSO SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOVIET VIEWS AND PRESSURES. FOR YEARS SOVIETS HAVE BEEN ASSIDUOUSLY WOOING GOM AND MAY BE PREPARING, IF THEY HAVE NOT ALREADY, TO MAKE A LITTLE INVESTMENT IN RAMGOOLAM'S RE-ELECTION. WHAT DO SOVIETS EXPECT TO GAIN, IN STRATEGIC SENSE, FROM SUPPORTING HIM? MY ANSWER WOULD BE AT MINIMUM ACTIVE OPPOSITION TO OUR DIEGO EXPANSION AND AT MAXIMUM SOME KIND OF SOVIET NAVY/"FISHING" FLEET FACILITY HERE. I JUDGE RAM'S POSITION AT THIS STAGE TO BE SOMETHING LIKE THIS: GET SOME LIMITED SUPPORT FROM SOVIETS AS ELECTION APPROACHES AND TRY TO PAY OFF WITH OPPOSITION TO OUR DIEGO EXPANSION WITHOUT COMMITTING HIMSELF TO ANY RUSSIAN NAVAL FACILITY. RAM'S COMMENT TO CANADIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER BARKER LAST MARCH THAT IF WE WENT AHEAD WITH DIEGO HE MIGHT HAVE TO GIVE NAVAL FACILITY TO SOVIETS HERE MAY HAVE BEEN MERELY AN EXERCISE IN "POLITICAL STREAKING" AS BARKER CHARACTERIZED IT TO ME RECENTLY. BUT I THINK A MORE

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REALISTIC INTERPRETATION WOULD BE THAT (1) RAM MEANT TO SHOW UK AND US THAT HE PREFERENCES NOT TO WHEEL AND DEAL WITH SOVIETS BUT WANTS US TO LAY OFF DIEGO EXPANSION AND (2) SOVIETS REALLY HAVE BEEN TRYING TO GET SOME SUCH CONCESSION FROM GOM.

D) RAMGOOLAM HAS SOME GRANDIOSE HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS ABOUT FUTURE ECONOMIC GAINS FROM OIL AND FISHING RESOURCES IN AREAS NORTH OF MAURITIUS, WHICH MIGHT SOME DAY BE SOUGHT ALL THE WAY

TO AND IN CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO (THESE GOM RIGHTS ARE SPECIFICALLY RECOGNIZED IN UK-GOM DEFENSE AGREEMENT). HE HAS RECENTLY BEEN PLAYING UP THIS IDEA NOT ONLY BECAUSE HE REALLY BELIEVES IN IT BUT ALSO AS ELECTORAL COUNTER-PROPAGANDA TO SHOW HE IS DEFENDING MAURITIAN RIGHTS AND PROMOTING MAURITIAN ECONOMIC POTENTIAL.

3. WHAT IS RESULT LIKELY TO BE WHEN NEXT ELECTION TAKES PLACE FOR MAURITIAN ATTITUDE ON DIEGO AND RELATED QUESTIONS?

A) IF RAMGOOLAM MAINTAINS HIS CANDIDACY AND STAYS IN SADDLE, HE WILL SURELY HAVE TO TRY TO TAKE DIEGO ISSUE AWAY FROM OPPOSITION BY COMING OUT STRONGLY AGAINST DIEGO EXPANSION AND PROBABLY PROMISING TO RENEGOTIATE UK-GOM AGREEMENT RE DIEGO TO PREVENT EXPANSION. IF BRITS STONEWALL HIM, HIS RE-ELECTION CHANCES WILL BE DAMAGED (THOUGH PERHAPS NOT FATALLY), HE MAY BLAME US MORE THAN UK, HE WILL PROBABLY DRAW CLOSER TO INDIA AND OTHER NON-ALIGNED AND HE MAY EVEN START FLIRTING MORE SERIOUSLY WITH SOVIETS.

B) IF RAMGOOLAM IS FORCED TO SURRENDER PARTY LEADERSHIP TO SOMEONE ELSE WHO THEN WINS ELECTION, ONE OF MAIN REASONS FOR SUCH SWITCH IN LABOR PARTY COULD WELL BE DIEGO ISSUE AND RESULTS WOULD STILL BE MUCH THE SAME AS IN (A) ABOVE.

C) IF LABOR PARTY UNDER RAMGOOLAM OR ANYONE ELSE LOSES ELECTION, NEW PRIME MINISTER WOULD NO DOUBT GIVE SOME OF CREDIT FOR HIS SUCCESS TO HIS OPPOSITION TO DIEGO AND HE WOULD BELIEVE HE HAD MANDATE TO RENEGOTIATE UK-GOM AGREEMENT.

D) THUS NO MATTER HOW NEXT ELECTION COMES OUT, EXISTING LEGAL UNDERPINNING FOR US IN DIEGO LIKELY TO BECOME LESS DEPENDABLE THAN HERETOFORE.

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4. 1974 IS NOT 1965. WHAT WE COULD DO THEN IN RELATIVE POLITICAL/STRATEGIC VACUUM DEPENDING BASICALLY ON COLONIAL SITUATION IS MUCH HARDER TO DO NOW IN FACE OF RISING TIDE OF NON-ALIGNED NATIONALISM, OFTEN CLEVERLY MANIPULATED AND EXPLOITED BY MOSCOW NOT TO MENTION PEKING, AND CONTINUING BRITISH WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS. SOONER OR LATER NEWER YOUNGER NATIONALISTIC LEADERSHIP IN LITTLE MAURITIUS, UNCOMMITTED TO AND UNATTRACTED BY TRADITIONAL SECURITY TIES WITH BRITAIN, WILL COLLABORATE WITH INDIA AND OTHER NON-ALIGNED TO DILUTE OR ABOLISH UK-GOM DEFENSE AGREEMENT. AND SOONER OR LATER UK, I WOULD GUESS, WILL TIRE OF THEIR DEFENSE COMMITMENT TO INCREASINGLY PESKY MAURITIUS -- AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH BRITS WERE NOT ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT IN THE FIRST PLACE. SO WE OUGHT TO BE THINKING HARD ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF POTENTIAL LEGAL/POLITICAL EROSION

OF OUR FOOTING IN DIEGO. WHAT ONCE LOOKED SOLID MAY TURN INTO

QUICKSAND BEFORE TOO LONG.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MILITARY BASES, DIEGO GARCIA, MILITARY AGREEMENTS, NATIONAL ELECTIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974PORTL00818
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740273-0646
From: PORT LOUIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974097/aaaaafyo.tel
Line Count: 171
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: (A) PORT LOUIS 0741 AND (B) PORT LOU, IS 0793
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUN 2002 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <07 MAR 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released:
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DIEGO CARGIA -- MAURITIAN CONSIDERATIONS
TAGS: MARR, IO, MP, XO, US, UK, (RAMGOOLAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005